

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An article having on at least a portion of its surface a protective and decorative coating having the appearance of stainless steel comprising:

at least one layer comprised of polymer;

vapor deposited at relatively a low pressure of below about 8 millitorr a color layer comprised of reaction products of refractory metal or refractory metal alloy, nitrogen and oxygen, wherein the total nitrogen and oxygen content of said reaction products of refractory metal or refractory metal alloy, nitrogen and oxygen is from about 4 to about 32 atomic percent with the nitrogen content being at least about 3 atomic percent,

wherein the color layer has a structure comprised of (1) amorphous metallic refractory metal with oriented, textured nano-sized grains of a metal nitride phase or (2) oriented, textured, nano-sized grains, of metallic refractory metal.

2. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein said total nitrogen and oxygen content is from about 5 to about 28 atomic percent with the nitrogen content being at least about 4 atomic percent.

3. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein a layer comprised of refractory metal or refractory metal alloy is on said at least one layer comprised of nickel.

4. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein a layer comprised of refractory metal oxide or refractory metal alloy oxide is on said color layer.

5. (Original) The article of claim 3 wherein a layer comprised of refractory metal oxide or refractory metal alloy oxide is on said color layer.

6. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein said coating has the appearance of brushed stainless steel finish.

7. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein said refractory metal is selected from the group consisting of zirconium, titanium and hafnium.

8. (Original) The article of claim 3 wherein said refractory metal is selected from the group consisting of zirconium, titanium and hafnium.

9. (Original) The article of claim 5 wherein said refractory metal is selected from the group consisting of zirconium, titanium and hafnium.

10. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein said polymer is electrocoated on said article.

11. (Currently Amended) The article of claim 1 wherein said ~~relatively~~ low pressure is below ~~about~~ 5 millitorr.

12. (Currently Amended) The article of claim 11 wherein said ~~relatively~~ low pressure is below ~~about~~ 3 millitorr.

13. (New) The article of claim 1 wherein the textured metal nitride is zirconium nitride oriented in a plane and smaller than 50 nm in grain size.

14. (New) The article of claim 1 wherein the textured metallic refractory metal is zirconium oriented in a plane and smaller than 80 nm in grain size.